

AMENDMENT

In the Claims

Please amend the claims as shown below:

1.-22. (Canceled)

23. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing, without manual intervention, a schedule for training an agent to perform interaction duties, ~~without manual intervention~~, comprising the steps of:

processing historical call volume data to identify a call volume pattern in the historical call volume data;

predicting a time during which call volume is expected to be at a declined level based on the identified call volume pattern;

scheduling a time slot at the predicted time for training so that the agent can accept training information without disrupting the agent's interaction duties;

responsive to the schedule, prompting the agent at the ~~time of the~~ scheduled time slot that the training information is available; and

terminating the interaction duties for the agent before providing the training information to the agent.

24. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 23, wherein identifying the call volume pattern comprises identifying periodic occurrences of declined levels of call volume from an earlier time period and

wherein the step of terminating the interaction duties comprises the agent spontaneously electing to terminate the agent's interaction duties to receive the training information is performed by the agent.

25. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 23, wherein the step of prompting the agent further comprises monitoring the agent to determine whether the agent is engaged in the interaction duties.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 23, wherein the step of prompting the agent further comprises determining whether the agent is available to receive the training information.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of providing the training information from which the agent can select a training segment.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 23, further comprising the steps of monitoring a work distribution component while providing the training information to the agent; and

if a workload of the work distribution component exceeds a predetermined criteria, terminating the training information to enable the agent to engage again in the interaction duties.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 28, wherein the step of terminating the training information occurs only if the agent has attained a predetermined performance score.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 28, wherein the step of terminating the training information occurs only if there is no more qualified agent to engage in the interaction duties.

31. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the steps recited in Claim 23.

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32. (Previously Presented) In association with a computer system for managing a constituent contact system comprising a communications network, a work distribution component, a contact engine, and an agent user interface, a method for training a contact agent to perform interaction duties, without manual intervention, the method comprising the steps of:

accepting call center load data from the work distribution component operable for receiving and distributing incoming contacts;

analyzing the call center load data to determine when to schedule a training session for the contact agent; and

scheduling the training session so that the contact agent can accept training information without disrupting the interaction duties of the contact agent.

33. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 32, wherein determining when to schedule the training session for the contact agent comprises determining a future time when the analysis of the call center load data forecasts that call center load will be at a temporarily reduced level, and

wherein scheduling the training session comprises scheduling the training session at the future time ~~further comprising the step of notifying the contact agent via an email message that the training session is scheduled.~~

34. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 32, further comprising the steps of:
accepting agent workload data from the work distribution component; and
analyzing the agent workload data in combination with the call center load data to determine when to schedule the training session.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 32, further comprising the steps of:
accepting agent performance data from a quality monitoring component; and
analyzing the agent performance data in combination with the call center load data to determine when to schedule the training session.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 32, further comprising the step of monitoring the agent user interface to determine whether the contact agent is engaged in the interaction duties and, in the absence of participation in the interaction duties, available to receive the training information.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 32, further comprising the step of disconnecting the contact agent from the contact engine before delivering the training information to the contact agent via the agent user interface.

38. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the steps recited in Claim 32.

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39. (Currently Amended) A method for training an agent to perform an interaction in association with a contact center, comprising the steps of:

receiving call center load data from a work distribution component operable for receiving and distributing incoming contacts;

processing the received call center load data to identify a historical pattern of declined call center load;

projecting the identified pattern into the future to predict ing a time of declined call center load when the agent is likely to be available for a training session ~~based on the call center load data;~~ and

scheduling the training session during the predicted time.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 39, further comprising the steps of: monitoring the agent during the predicted time to determine whether the agent is available for the training session; and

if the agent is available, delivering the training session to the agent.

41. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 39, further comprising the step of prompting the agent that the training session is available during the predicted time.

42. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 39, further comprising the steps of: receiving agent workload data from the work distribution component; and analyzing the agent workload data to determine when the agent may be available to receive the training session.

43. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the steps recited in Claim 39.

44. (Currently Amended) A method for training a contact agent to perform interaction duties in association with a contact center, comprising the steps of:

identifying past occurrences of lulls in contact center activity;

predicting future occurrences of lulls in contact center activity based on the identified past occurrences;

scheduling a training session to coincide with one of the predicted future occurrences so that the contact agent can accept training information without disrupting the interaction duties of the contact agent;

disconnecting the contact agent from a contact engine so that the contact agent does not perform the interaction duties during the training session;

providing the training information to the contact agent during the scheduled training session; and

if the contact center has a workload that exceeds a predetermined threshold, terminating the scheduled training session and connecting the contact agent to the contact engine to permit the contact agent to perform the interaction duties.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 44, wherein the step of scheduling a training session further comprises receiving schedule data for the contact agent.

46. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 44, wherein the identifying step ~~of scheduling a training session further~~ comprises receiving workload data for the contact agent and identifying the past occurrences of lulls in contact center activity based on processing the received workload data.

47. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 44, wherein the identifying step ~~of scheduling a training session further~~ comprises receiving workload data for the contact center and identifying the past occurrences of lulls in contact center activity based on processing the received workload data.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 44, wherein the step of scheduling a training session further comprises receiving performance data for the contact agent.

49. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 44, wherein the step of disconnecting the contact agent from the contact engine is controlled by the contact agent.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 44, wherein the step of providing the training information to the contact agent further comprises selecting a training segment during the training session.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 44, wherein the step of terminating the training session occurs after determining the contact agent satisfies a predetermined performance level.

52. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the steps recited in Claim 44.

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53. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented system for managing communications between an organization and its constituents, the system comprising:

a communications network that supports communication between an agent of the organization and the constituents;

a scheduling component adapted to receive schedule data and workload data and to schedule a training session for the agent based on the agent's predicted availability to accept training; and

an information delivery component adapted to deliver information to the agent during the scheduled training session.

54. (Previously Presented) The system of Claim 53, wherein the workload data is agent workload data.

55. (Previously Presented) The system of Claim 53, wherein the workload data is organization workload data.

56. (Previously Presented) The system of Claim 53, wherein the information delivery component is further adapted to determine whether the agent is available to receive information during the scheduled training session.

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57. (New) A method for scheduling training for agents of a contact center who service contacts, comprising the steps of:

receiving workload data from a device that monitors interactions between the agents and the contacts;

processing the received workload data to identify a cyclical change in workload that has occurred in the past;

projecting the cyclical change in workload into the future to predict a future time of decreased workload; and

planning to hold a training session at the predicted future time.

58. (New) The method of Claim 57, wherein the identified cyclical change comprises an identified time, that recurs weekly, during which the workload has historically been in a declined state.

59. (New) The method of Claim 57, wherein planning to hold the training session comprises scheduling the training session to coincide with the predicted future time.

60. (New) The method of Claim 57, further comprising the step of
at the predicted time, offering one of the agents an option of holding the planned training session or continuing to service contacts.

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